


FINAL FANTASY XIII REMINISCENCE ~Tracer of Memories~

Chapter 10: Passenger

 kaiho-sha.tumblr.com/post/91350000397/final-fantasy-xiii-reminiscence-tracer-of



Translation credits to Galvea@GameFAQs.

I'm on a train. I was put on the train, like a piece of cargo. My hands are cuffed, I'm in a straightjacket, and they're taking me somewhere, along with all these other people...

Everyone's in their seats, heads and spirits down. The hoods of the restraining suits hide their expressions so I can't see them, but I know all the faces around me must be coloured with fear and despair. Our peaceful days have been taken away from us, without warning, and we're about to be exiled, turned out into a world full of danger. Soldiers with guns watch us, alert.

Suddenly, the train sways violently. The soldiers lose their balance, and in that instant I dash from my seat.

I rush at the soldiers, send them sprawling. A soldier falls, loses his grip on a remote control, and I crush it to pieces underfoot; the electrical locks on our handcuffs come undone. The other soldiers are going to come for me any second now. I throw off my restraining suit and make a leap. I land right in the middle of my enemies, and one good kick takes care of the lot.

– Oh. This is a dream.

I realize this as I fire the gun I just stole from an enemy soldier. And as soon as I realize this is a dream, I immediately come to my senses.

It was a dream of "that other world". It's been some time since that last happened. I think it's because I'd been going over the records of my interviews last night. Sazh had given a lively description – mimed it, even – of the way Lightning stole onto the train for the Purge, how she made short work of the soldiers.

In the end, I still haven't published the results of those interviews.

The bond between Lightning, Sazh, Hope, and the others, the bond they shared – their bond is a story of how men banded together to stand against God, and I know that if I share it with the entire world, it will be a source of courage and hope for the people. But I also know that once I do that, all eyes will be trained on Lightning and her friends, whether they like it or not. It troubles me to disturb their peaceful lives, not when all the fighting's finally behind them. So in other words, I went to great pains to get my interviews, uncovered the truth, but ultimately couldn't bring

myself to publish my findings. I fail as a journalist, I know.

I won't deny it. I'm too many steps removed from what a journalist's supposed to be, these days.

The old me, the person I used to be, I think maybe she died on that battlefield.

I was reporting on the civil war when I almost bought it, and after allowing myself the minimum amount of medical treatment and rest, I went straight back to the battlefield. Those around me tried to stop me, but I didn't listen. I approached the opposing forces, and did my best to get everyone's side of the story out, without bias. I made sure to keep a neutral stance, to keep any kind of slant out of my reports, and to avoid setting any side up as "the bad guys". I was careful to cover every possible angle.

My efforts to stay absolutely neutral paid off, I think, because somehow or other I earned the trust of the various forces. They began to speak frankly to me, and I learned that many of them didn't want to fight, at all. Only problem was, they never found a way to sit down and talk with their enemies.

That was where I came in. I took on the role of the mediator. I stood in the middle, among all the forces in play, and as I carried out my duties as a reporter, I also delivered messages, arranged for negotiations, fixed for them to get in touch with each other. I was just the go-between, but I was also getting into the neck of things with the principal actors of war. I'm pretty sure I've already violated the ethics code all journalists strive to protect, the necessity to take the objective view at all times. Worse still, if things don't work out, I may very well stand accused of having been complicit in a war crime.

I knew all that, and wasn't troubled in the least. I wanted to help bring about an end to the civil war. So here I am, in the middle of preparations for an important meeting. The plan is to have all the parties involved come together in another country, away from the battlefields, and have them sit down and talk. I don't know if this is going to work. I can't even rule out the possibility that there may be assassins out to get me, courtesy of those who want to sabotage the negotiations.

But it doesn't matter if I end up killed, all that means is that I'll be meeting Caius Ballad again. If I bite the dust while walking on the path I believe to be right, so be it; I think I'll be able to stand before the God of Death with pride in my eyes this time.

I'm not so vain as to think that I can change the world all by myself. But I believe that I can help steer the world in a better direction. That's the courage, the hope I found in the story of "that other world".

Every time I think of that story, my heart brightens a little.

Chapter 10: Passenger

I'm just coming out of dreamland, and I wish I could have had a little more sleep. I really want to get some rest on this train ride; work kept me up late last night, and there's an important meeting waiting for me, where I'm headed. It had been a pleasant doze; I was able to relax in the comfortable train seats and feel the rhythmical duet of wheels and rail drum through me. It was nice, and I wish it didn't have to end.

I close my eyes, and for a while I give myself over to the rock and sway of the train. At some point, an intense light pierces through my eyelids. I'm drenched by the sunlight filtering in through the window; I reluctantly open my eyes and look out. The skies are a clear blue, and the verdant countryside spreads before me, under the bright clean sunlight. I'll only get to my destination sometime in the evening, so that's still a long ways off. Shouldn't hurt to catch a few more z's in the meantime.

Eventually the train begins to slow, little by little. We must be nearing the next station. I hear footsteps approach from behind, then go past me. Must be a passenger getting off. Through the dividers of my box seat, I catch a

glimpse of the back of a light coat. A woman with hair the colour of roses.

I'm wide awake the next instant.

It strikes me like lightning. I jump to my feet like I'd been burned, and whisper, in a daze:

"Lightning..."

She stops.

She turns towards me, a sharp look on her face. I don't blame her; I'd have my defenses up, too, if a stranger called out to me, without warning. But under that hard expression, I think I see a hint of Serah Farron there, too.

It's Lightning, no question about it. Her name came up in every single one of the interviews I conducted. It's ironic. I wanted so badly to meet her, but couldn't find my way to her. And now here I am, face-to-face with her, by complete accident.

She doesn't say anything. I begin to talk.

"I've always wanted to meet you. I met with everyone, but you were the only one I couldn't get to."

She seems to know what I'm talking about.

"...I see, so it's you."

The edge in her look fades away.

"The reporter who's been calling on everyone, and wants to meet me – yes, I've heard about you."

"Please, I would very much like to interview you."

A deafening screech from the rails drowns out my voice. The train is quickly losing speed. We're reaching the next stop.

She steals a glance out the window, and shakes her head.

"Sorry, but I don't have time to chat. This is my stop."

"Then I'll come with you, I'll –"

Get off here too – I'm just about to say this when it hits me.

This is incredible luck, bumping into Lightning here after all those dead ends trying to get a lead on her. It probably isn't going to happen again, so I can't let this meeting slip through my fingers.

But right now, I –

I have to look away in disappointment. With a sigh, I force out the words:

"...I understand. It's really too bad, but I suppose I can't always have it my way."

"You're sure?"

She sounds more surprised by this than I am. I don't think she expected me to back down so easily.

I *am* disappointed, of course.

But this isn't my stop.

I have a mission. There's someone I need to meet at my destination, and that's still a long ways off. I have to meet this person and find a way to stop that war. It's my duty. There's no guarantee that my actions, insignificant as they are, will end the war, but I've made up my mind to try.

I'll find the path that leads to an end to the war, and go down it, as far as I can – that's the mission I've given myself. The people wishing for peace are waiting for me at the end of this road. I can't afford to get off before my stop.

I raise my head, and look at Lightning.

"There are things I have to do. I'll take a rain check on that interview, if that's alright with you."

"I don't know about that."

Her words are a little stand-offish, but her voice is gentle. She hasn't rejected me outright, at least.

"There's something I want you to know. I've always wanted to say this to you, if I ever met you."

We're almost at the station now, and the train's about to come to a complete stop. There isn't time. The sound of the screeching brakes tells me I have to hurry, and my words tumble out in a rush.

"I... No, all of us, mankind, humanity, we're alright. We're definitely going to be alright. There are times when we make one mistake after another, when we hurt each other. But even so, this world – "this world" that you and your friends won in your victory over God... this world is built on "us", we're the ones supporting this world, we're the scaffolding. So we'll try to sort this world out, with what little strength we have, by ourselves. We may be small and insignificant on our own, but together we'll make the world a better place."

"...I understand. I leave it to you."

She nods, and turns away from me. That was goodbye.

I watch from the window as Lightning steps onto the platform and walks away. The train begins to move, and I immediately lose sight of her. Strangely enough, I find myself without regrets. The expression on her face when we parted ways is seared unto my memory, and I can still see it.

It was a warm, gentle smile. And to be honest, it caught me by surprise. I'd always imagined Lightning to be strict and exacting, never one to let her guard down. I never thought she'd smile like that.

And it occurs to me – her fight ended in "that other world".

Lightning sent the God of Light to his grave, and by doing so freed herself from all the fighting. And she wasn't the only one who attained freedom, either. God, the manipulator of men, was defeated, and all human souls broke free from God's leash, to be reborn here in this new world.

That includes her. She's been reborn, too.

She no longer has to fight. Maybe she doesn't even call herself "Lightning" now. A quiet life, her heart open to friends and family, people that mean the world to her, happy smiles shared all around – I'm sure that must be her life now.

I have a feeling I'll meet her again, somewhere, someday. I've never been able to get any leads on her, and even now, after bumping into her by accident, I still don't have her address; in spite of all this, I'm absolutely certain this isn't going to be the last time we meet. She knows who I am. She must have heard about me from one of her friends. The bond between them is as strong as ever, even after their rebirth here in this world. If I visit her friends again, I'm sure I'll be able to meet her somewhere. They're still friends, after all, and will always be a part of one

another.

It occurs to me to wonder why she got off at that station. Is she going to meet someone? Is one of her friends waiting for her? Or is she off to meet a special someone, someone I don't know yet? It doesn't matter which. She's free now. She can go anywhere, meet anyone. What she wishes for will definitely come true. I want that for her, from the very bottom of my heart.

"The will of men determines the fate of this world without God"; if this is true, I choose to believe that if I strongly wish it, an ever more brilliant future awaits her. May this woman, who was once a brilliant flash of light in "that other world", chance upon hope – this was my wish, and it was like a prayer, a promise.

~THE END~

This concludes the Final Fantasy XIII novel: FFXIII REMINISCENCE ~Tracer of Memories~

What do you feel about the novel? Want to thank the translator? Put it in my inbox and I'll send it to him!

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